

RESTORATION UPDATE

A newsletter on the Salton Sea Restoration Project

Salton Sea Authority

December 2003

www.saltonsea.ca.gov

Torres Martinez Tribe Considered For SSA Board Membership

The Salton Sea Authority will consider revising its Joint Powers Agreement December 18 to allow the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla tribe to become a full voting member.

If approved, the seating of the tribe's representative would expand the Salton Sea Authority to five agencies. Other members are the Imperial Irrigation and Coachella Valley Water districts and counties of Riverside and Imperial.

Although the tribe has been an ex-officio member of the Authority since its formation in 1993, State legislation was passed and approved by the Governor in 2001 that allowed the tribe to join the Authority as full voting members.

"The tribe is a major stakeholder and landowner around and under the Salton Sea and we welcome them to the table to join with us in making decisions about the future of the Salton Sea," said Authority board Chairman Andy Horne, a member of the Imperial Irrigation District Board of Directors.

"We are looking forward to a full voting partnership with the other Authority members," said Raymond Torres, Chairman of the Tribe. "Our involvement is just another indication of the importance of local input and direction for the Salton Sea's restoration efforts."

The enabling legislation, drafted by then-Assemblyman David Kelley, designated the tribe to be a public agency and authorized to enter a joint powers agreement to participate in the Salton Sea Authority. Previously, state law did not permit tribes to be members of such authorities.

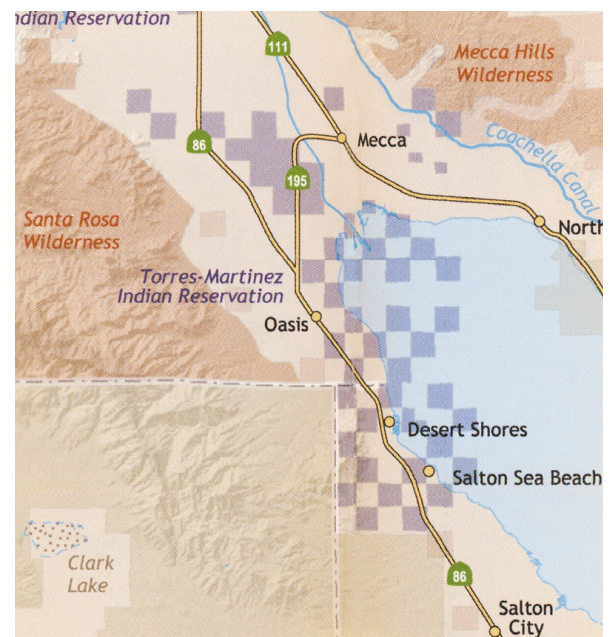
The Authority and the tribe's legal counsel developed the addendum to the Joint Powers Agreement. Because of the sovereign immunity enjoyed by the tribe, under modification to the joint powers agreement, it is treated distinctly from other members.

"The Torres-Martinez are interested in taking an active role in Salton Sea restoration efforts, and their location on the northern portion of the Sea makes it a key component of such efforts," Torres said.

Ancestors of current Torres-Martinez Tribal members were Desert Cahuilla Indians, who distinguished themselves with their ability to develop water supplies with hand dug, walk-in wells.

The Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Reservation was established by Executive Order on May 15, 1876. The reservation is situated in the lower Coachella Valley at the downstream end of the watershed. Approximately 11,000 acres of the reservation were flooded by the Colorado River when the Salton Sea was formed in 1905-1907 and are still submerged.

In March 2002, a long-standing water rights issue between the Torres Martinez - the U.S. government, area farmers and the Imperial and Coachella Valley Water districts was resolved in a negotiated settlement. The Torres Martinez received \$14.2 million in compensation for the flooded reservation lands, enabling them to buy replacement land and fund economic development projects.



Upon Executive Order of President Ulysses S. Grant, the Torres-Martinez Indian Reservation was established on May 15, 1876. The modern day Salton Sea covered much of the original reservation in 1905.

Pilot Project Investigates New Methods To Control Algae

A new Salton Sea Authority pilot project will soon be underway that will test different methods of removing phosphorus from tail water that flows off fields and into the Salton Sea. Phosphorus is a main ingredient in crop fertilizer. It is also a main contributor to the production of algae, along with nitrogen and carbon. Removing phosphorus from the Salton Sea will also remove the algae blooms that contribute to the eutrophication process that cause the massive fish kills. The 18-month project, entitled “Reduction of Eutrophicants in Streams that Feed Into the Salton Sea,” is under the joint management of UC Riverside and the USGS Salton Sea Science Office. Funding has been provided to the Salton Sea Authority through the State Water Resource Control Board.

A simulated 200-foot long agricultural drain ditch has been constructed at Kent SeaTech in the lower Coachella Valley next to the Whitewater River. Phosphorus-rich Whitewater River water will be pumped into the ditch. Scientists will add chemicals that will bond with the phosphorus in the water at the head of the ditch. The heavier by-product will then sink, or “precipitate” out of the water, and can be removed through dredging.

“There are a number of different chemicals we plan on testing,” says Chris Amrhein, UCR professor of soil and water chemistry. “We’re eager to determine which chemicals cause the fastest and most significant sedimentation after bonding with the phosphorus.”

Many variables will be evaluated during the project, including the water velocity, temperature, phosphorus concentration and the design of the ditch.

Agricultural water runoff has its highest concentration of phosphorus in the tail water as it leaves the fields. This pilot project is looking at ways to knock out the phosphorus before it reaches key tributaries to the Salton Sea, such as the New and Alamo Rivers in Imperial County. In theory, the treatment chemicals would be added to farm drainage ditch water. The chemicals have a long history of use in drinking water and wastewater, as well as food processing. The precipitated chemicals, along with the phosphorus, would be removed by dredging the ditches once a year.

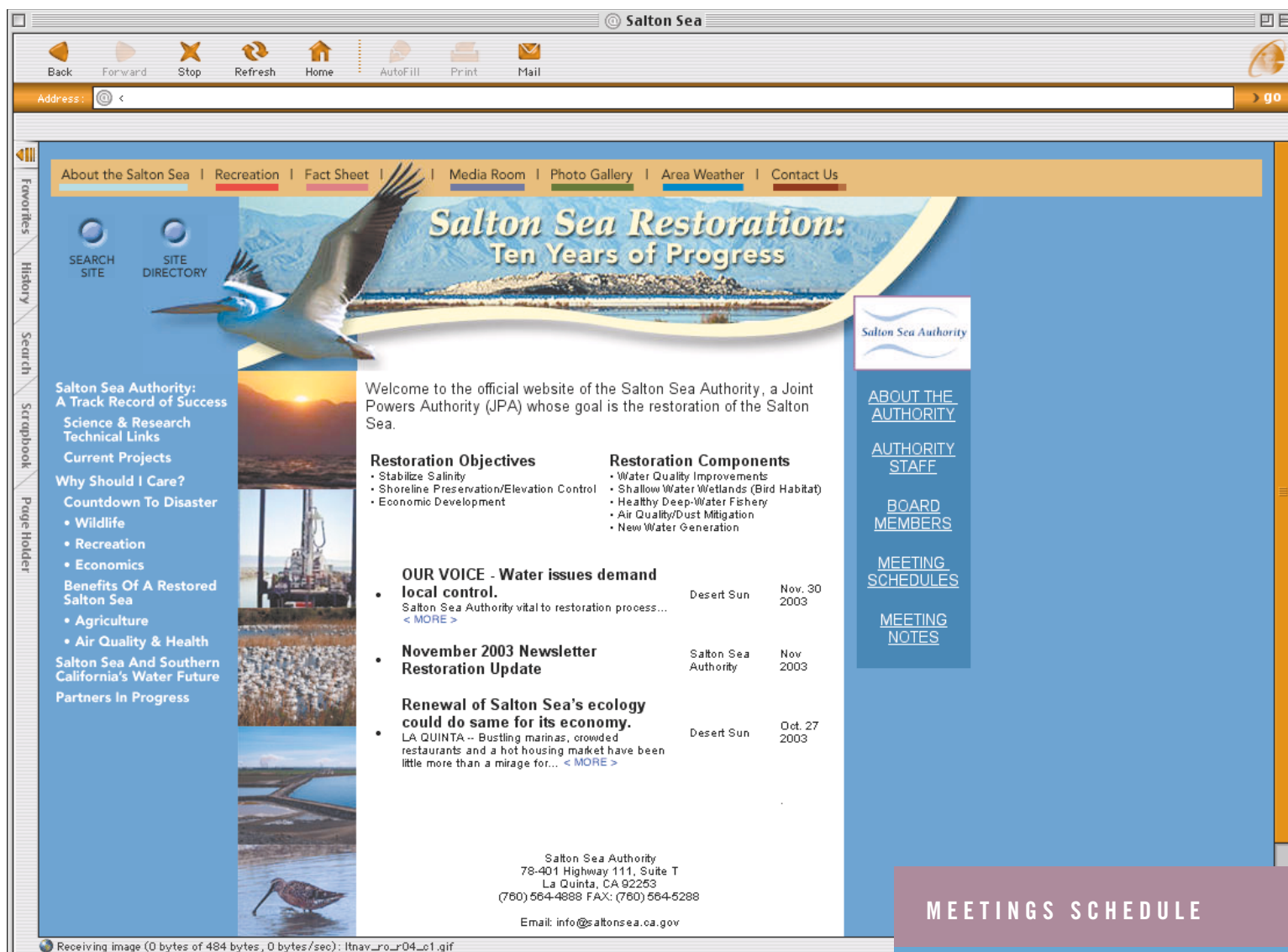
“The simplest way to remove the phosphorus would be to eliminate the fertilizer, but that would put the farmers out of business,” Amrhein said. “However, we’re all working together to reduce the nutrient loading to the rivers without adversely affecting agriculture. If we can do that through good science, it’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

A groundbreaking for the project is planned for 11am on Thursday, December 18th at the Kent SeaTech Corporation at Hwy 86 and 70th Avenue. If you plan on attending, please RSVP by calling the Salton Sea Authority at 760-564-4888.



A prototypical agricultural ditch has been replicated at Kent SeaTech to study ways of reducing phosphorus run-off into streams that feed into the Salton Sea.

New SSA Web Site About To Go Live



The new Salton Sea web site will go live before the end of the year.

The Salton Sea Authority will "go live" with a new web site by the end of the month. The new site, which is patterned after the Everglades Restoration web site, places a greater emphasis on restoration efforts, research and information.

"The current web site was created in 2000 with the idea that it would be a one-stop shop for Salton Sea information," says Executive Director Tom Kirk. "The new site makes restoration the primary focus and contains a lot of the images and reference material available in the Salton Sea Atlas compiled by the Redlands Institute," Kirk added.

Some of the features being added to the new Salton Sea web site include a "Countdown to Disaster" that is counting down 15 years, currently set at 5475 days. Other new features include a Photo Gallery with hundreds of downloadable scenic, wildlife and historic j-peg images of the Salton Sea, a Media Room that contains recent press releases and a "Partners in Progress" section that provides expanded links to agencies working with the Salton Sea Authority on restoration efforts.

MEETINGS SCHEDULE

Board of Directors

December 18, 2pm
Imperial Irrigation District - La Quinta

Technical Advisory Meeting

January 8th, 10:30am
Salton Sea Comm. Services District

Board of Directors

January 22, 10am
TBD

Salton Sea Authority

Plaza La Quinta

78-401 Highway 111, Suite T
La Quinta, CA 92253
www.saltonsea.ca.gov